

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: THE MOLYNEAUX INITIATIVE

REF: BELFAST 002

1. JAMES MOLYNEAUX, OFFICIAL UNIONIST MP FROM SOUTH ANTRIM AND LEADER OF THE UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION (UUUC) PARLIAMENTARY PARTY EXPLAINED HIS "ADMINISTRATIVE DEVOLUTION SUGGESTION" TO THE REPORTING OFFICER JANUARY 24. EARLIER IN THE DAY MR. MOLYNEAUX HAD GIVEN DETAILS OF HIS PROPOSALS TO THE OFFICIAL UNIONIST EXECUTIVE INCLUDING LEADER HARRY WEST. REPORTING OFFICER HAS FOLLOWING IMPRESSION:

(A) OFFICIAL UNIONIST EXECUTIVE INTERESTED IN FURTHER DISCUSSION OF MOLYNEAUX PLAN BUT ONE CENTRAL CONCERN IS THAT HMG WOULD ACCEPT ADMINISTRATIVE DEVOLUTION AS LONG-TERM SUBSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE DEVOLUTION,

(B) OTHER MEMBER GROUPS OF COALITION, DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY (DUP) AND UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST MOVEMENT HAVE NOT BEEN CONSULTED ABOUT MOLYNEAUX INITIATIVE BUT DUP LEADER PAISLEY,
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AS MP, HAS STUDIED MOLYNEAUX SPEECH IN WHICH HE MADE SUGGESTIONS AND HAS RESERVED POSITION.

(C) SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) IN SIMILAR POSITION WITH MP GERRY FITT ONLY MEMBER CONVERSANT WITH PROPOSAL.

2. MR. MOLYNEAUX SAID HE WAS SUGGESTING RETURN OF SECOND TIER

OF ADMINISTRATION TO NORTHERN IRELAND. RESPONSIBILITIES OF AREA BOARDS, NOW COMPOSED LARGELY OF NON-ELECTED MEMBERS, WERE ONCE HELD BY REGIONAL COUNCILS BUT HAD BEEN ABSORBED BY STORMONT CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WELL BEFORE 1972. MR. MOLYNEAUX THOUGHT CHANGE HAD BEEN MADE WHEN BRIAN FAULKNER MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT. MR. MOLYNEAUX CITED EXAMPLE OF STRATHCLYDE COUNCIL WHICH HE SAID CONTROLS HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES, ROADS, HEALT AND ALL OTHER GOVERNMENTAL FUNCTIONS THAT DIRECTLY AFFECT ELECTORATE TO WHOM ELECTED COUNCILLORS RESPONSIBLE. IN MOLYNEAUX PROPOSALS THESE FUNCTIONS WOULD BE RESTORED TO A BODY "ABOUT THE SIZE OF THE ASSEMBLY OR CONVENTION," 70-80, ELECTED THROUGH PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AND EXERCISING SUPERVISION THROUGH STANDING COMMITTEES FOR EACH FUNCTION. PRESENT MACHINERY OF AREA BOARDS WOULD BE RETAINED AND SECRETARY OF STATE AND HIS MINISTERS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE RESPONSIBLE TO WESTMINSTER. MR. MOLYNEAUX FAVORED ONE "REGIONAL COUNCIL" AT STORMONT BUT NOTED THAT SOME OFFICIAL UNIONISTS THOUGHT THREE COUNCILS WOULD BE PREFERABLE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT HIS USE OF TERM "REGIONAL" IN "ENGLISH SENSE" WAS SUBJECT TO MISUNDERSTANDING IN ULSTEER WHERE TERM CUSTOMARILY USED TO MEAN PROVINCE-WIDE AND THAT THIS ACCOUNTED FOR SOME NEGATIVE REACTION.

3. MR. MOLYNEAUX ACKNOWLEDGED THAT A STORMONT COUNCIL WOULD HAVE BUILT-IN UNIONIST MAJORITY BUT ARGUED THAT "IN OLD DAYS, NATIONALIST" WERE OFTEN SELECTED FOR POSITIONS OF CONSIDERABLE AUTHORITY. HE ALSO PROFESSED THAT OBJECTION TO "REPUBLICANS IN GOVERNMENT AS A RIGHT" WOULD NOT ARISE SINCE AN ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL WAS NOT A CABINET. HE SAW "THE MINORITY" REASSURED UNCLASSIFIED

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BECAUSE COUNCIL WOULD NOT EXERCISE LEGISLATIVE POWERS THAT COULD BE USED TO DISCRIMINATE AND THE "MAJORITY" REASSURED BECAUSE THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF THE PROVINCE WITHIN U.K. WOULD BE SAFEGUARDED.

4. CONGEN FORESEES NO RUSH BY NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL GROUPS TO EMBRACE MOLYNEAUX SUGGESTIONS. HE APPARENTLY MADE ORIGINAL PROPOSALS INDEPENDENTLY WITHOUT CONSULTING COLLEAGUES AND IT HAS TAKEN MORE THAN MONOM JUST TO BRIDGE UNDERSTANDING-GAP BETWEEN WESTMINSTER AND HIS OWN PARTY EXECUTIVE. HIS SUGGESTION COULD BE ATTRACTIVE TO SOME PARTIES, INCLUDING NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE. WITH BEST WILL IN WORLD DIRECT RULE IS CUMBERSOME AND REMOTE AND MEMBERS SECRETARY OF STATE TEAM ARE OUCPIED WITH MASSES OF DETAIL AND CORRESPONDENCE THAT COULD BE DELEGATED TO AN ELECTED BODY. OFFICIAL UNIONISTS AND SDLP TO SEE SECRETARY OF STATE MASON SEPARATELY THIS WEEK AND WILL, AT LEAST, HAVE A NEW TOPIC FOR DISCUSSION.SPICER

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